

# Small Group Activities

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## Word Pictures

- Working in teams, students select one of the words from the word wall and illustrate it on the board or on chart paper. The opposing team gets a point for a correct guess and illustrates another word.

## Word Relationships

- Each student shares the word on their word card with a partner, and together, they decide on a way that their two words are related or have something in common. A time limit could be imposed after which students rotate to a new partner and repeat the process. After doing this a few times, the pair could join with another pair, and see if they can find a relationship between the four words. Discussing similarities and differences helps students to master new vocabulary meanings.

## Word Cards Partner Game

- Pairs of students take turns choosing a word card and offering a definition for the word. The partner guesses and spells the word.

## Drama

- Students choose a word from the word wall and improvise a situation that portrays the word. Peers guess the word.

## Categories

- Students create categories and group the words from the word wall to fit those categories. Set the number of words that are allowed in a “miscellaneous” category and create a maximum and minimum number of categories that can be used. This activity could be done individually first; then students share and compare their categories with a partner. They share their groups of words with the class who guess the principle behind the sorting.

## Musical Words

- In groups of five or six, with each group member having one word card, students circulate the cards within their groups, while music is playing. When the music stops, the group members take turns giving the meaning of the word they have. Group members can challenge the correctness of the definition offered by their peer. If a group member cannot provide a definition, the group members discuss the meaning, asking the teacher for assistance, if necessary.

## Contextualization

- Students write about a situation in which a word wall word would be commonly used. The student reads the situation to the class, who then guess the relevant word.

- As a variation, students portray multiple contextual situations, if applicable, e.g., *brackets* are something that could be spoken about in both writing and construction contexts.

### **Names for Musical Groups**

- Students brainstorm creative names used by musical groups from both the past and present. After looking at the unique and varied nature of the names, students use one to three words from the word wall to create a name for a musical group. As an extension, students could write a description of the fictitious group and its style of music.

### **List, Group, Label**

- This activity increases students' exposure to vocabulary, forces them to define their rules or categories for their lists and has them working on the skill of classification which is important to learning higher order thinking skills.
- Have students study the words on your word wall and make up four different groups of words. Then they read one of their lists aloud. The rest of the students must guess what category the words belong to (or what the rule is for those words). For example, let's say that I read my list of words and they were "...achieving, jumping, running, skipping..." The rest of the class must guess that these are all action words or verbs. Another example might be "...dog, cat, bird, armadillo..." (names of animals).

# Individual Activities

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## **Definition Bingo**

- Students fill in a bingo-type grid with word wall words. As definitions are read out, students cross out the corresponding word on their grid. The first person to get a complete line of words wins.
- As a variation: give synonyms or antonyms for appropriate word wall words.

## **Reading Bingo**

- Students fill in a bingo card with new words for a unit. As students complete the unit's reading, they fill in the page numbers where the unit's words appear. Acknowledge the first person who gets a straight line completed, then assign completion of the entire grid for everyone in the class.
- As a variation: Students skim text to find words they have listed on their card.

## **Word of the Day**

- Choose a "Word of the Day." Encourage students to use the "Word of the Day" meaningfully during the class and highlight appropriate use. Add the word to the word wall.

## **Words in Writing**

- Encourage students to use the word wall words in their daily classroom writing. When work is collected or read in class, highlight the words from the word wall that are used appropriately.

## **Memory Association**

- Encourage students to make connections and increase comprehension by selecting a word wall word that connects to a positive personal memory. Students explain the connection in writing and share their writing with a partner. Volunteers read their writing aloud to the class.

## **Making Connections**

- Students give an example of someone from history or the present for each of the traits on the character traits word wall. For a shorter version, students choose ten of the traits for which they could give one example.
- Note: This activity could be adapted to suit other word wall topics.

## **Word Connotation**

- Students indicate words with positive or negative connotations from their personal word wall list, using a set of plus (+) and minus (–) cards. Student volunteers indicate which words have positive connotation and which words have negative connotation by placing the appropriate card beside the word wall word.

## **Concept Ladder**

- Students place a word wall word at either the top or the bottom of a ladder image. In each successive part of the ladder, students fill in information about a different aspect of the word,
- e.g., what is it like, what is it opposite of, where is it found, how is it used.

### **Concept Map**

- Students create a concept map for words that define complex concepts. They place the word in a circle or box on the center of a page and then draw other circles/boxes branching off the center to contain subtopics which can then be further broken down.

### **Media Re-naming**

- Ask students to re-name a television show or movie using at least one of the appropriate word wall words. Students write the new name on a piece of paper, along with the original name. Use the papers periodically at the end of class by reading out the new title and asking students to guess the original name of the show or movie.

### **Rankings**

- Students individually list the word wall words, in writing, from most difficult to easiest for them to understand or to spell. If this activity is done at the beginning, middle, and end of a unit, students can note how their rankings have changed.

### **Visual Representation**

- Students choose one word from the word wall to convey its meaning visually. Encourage students to not just add illustrations around the word, but to use the letters of the word to convey meaning appropriately. Post the visual representations around the room and/or the word wall.

### **Concept Wheel**

- A "concept wheel" is another graphic organizer you can use to allow students to build meaning for themselves. Draw a circle on a piece of paper. Divide the circle into four parts. Make copies for each student. In the first box, the child writes the word from the word wall that they would like to understand better. In the second box they brainstorm a list of words that they think of when they hear the word in the first box. In the third box is the formal definition of the word (look up in the dictionary or an encyclopedia). The fourth box is the definition in the child's own words. It really goes along with the constructivist theory that children learn best when they "construct" meaning of words on their own.

# Word Wall Games

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## Hot Seat

- Engage your students in a "word wall" term game by playing "Hot Seat." Place a stool or chair in the center of the room and choose a student to sit in the hot seat with his back to the "word wall." Allow another student to select a term from the "word wall" and show the term to the class. The seated student then begins to ask "yes" or "no" questions to the class in order to deduce the selected word. If the "Hot Seat" student guesses the word before asking 20 questions, he wins a prize. Replace the word on the "word wall" and select a new guesser.

## Spotlight math

- One idea that I really like is SPOTLIGHT MATH. Turn off classroom lights. Shine a flashlight on a word. Students read the word together. Shine the light on one student. They give the definition. Shine on another student to verify definition.
- I might even make it a game where they have to state definition and then show us what it means with a problem or picture.

## Password

- It's called password. Two students come to the front of the room and face the class with their backs to the board. Put a vocab word on the board for the rest of the class to see. Students raise their hands to give a one word clue that does not have any part of the vocab word in it. (Ex: can't say "number" if the vocab word is rational number). Each of the two players takes turns calling on a classmate to give them the one word clue. The student may guess the word after the clue is given. If they guess it right, they get to stay up. The student who gave the last clue takes the place of the player who did not guess the word. My students loved this game last year.

## BLUFF

- Another game that students of mine really love is BLUFF. This game is good to review words or concepts that students already know.
- Split the class into 2 teams. Ask a question of one team. Students who would like to be considered to answer they stand. They can either KNOW the question or BLUFF. Choose one student to answer. If they get it correct, the team gets points for everyone standing up (even if they were bluffing!). If the student does not get it correct, the question moves to the next team OR you can tell the answer and give the next team a new question. Students like that they can Bluff. They also really like that if they totally don't know the question then they can choose to stay seated and not have to worry about getting called on. It is a very safe game. They like that they can get a TON of points too!

## Mind Reader

- Each student numbers their paper from one to five. The teacher will give clues about one of the word wall words, and each time the children write their guess next to the number. For your first clue, always give the same clue: "It's one of the words

on the word wall." The teacher gives successive clues. By the fifth clue, everyone should have "guessed" the mystery word! However, if they can "Read Your Mind" they might be able to guess the word before the final clue. Do the same for each of the five words.

### **Mystery Word**

- In this game, students use clues to figure out a "mystery word" that appears on the classroom word wall. Provide each student with a small piece of paper; this is a great activity for recycling some of that scrap paper you have been collecting. Alternate idea: If you use [mini-whiteboards or chalkboards](#) in your classroom, this is an excellent opportunity to use them. Have students number their papers or whiteboard from 1 to 5. Then select a "mystery word" from the word wall (or vocabulary or spelling lists) and give five successive clues to help students identify the word. Each successive clue should help students further narrow down the words on the word wall to the special mystery word. As you give each clue, students should select one word from the word wall that matches all the clues given to that point in the game. The last clue should be the most obvious one.
- After you have given the five clues, have students show their papers or slates. Which student(s) guessed the mystery word with the fewest possible clues.

### **Fly Swat Game**

- Divide your class into 2 groups. Display on the blackboard 20 vocabulary words (words could also be displayed on the Word Wall). Choose one student from each team and ask them to turn their backs to the words. Give both students a fly swatter. The teacher gives a definition for one of the words. The students will face the words and attempt to be the first to "fly swat" the word to earn points for their team.
- Variation: Display on the blackboard 20 vocabulary words and over 10 of them paste "flies" made of cardboard paper with a piece of Velcro on them. Give both students a fly swatter with the other side of Velcro on them.

# Word Wall Writing Tasks

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## **Maximum Words in a Story**

- Students write a story involving as many words from the word wall as possible within a given time frame. Students underline all the word wall words they used and share their stories in small groups. Each group decides which to read aloud, e.g., the story with the most words or the most creative story.

## **Unfolding Five Words in a Story**

- Students are given a word wall word every two-minutes for ten minutes (five words in total) to incorporate into a story they are writing on a topic of their choice. When a new word is given, students work that word into their story immediately. Encourage students to write continuously and quickly during the ten minutes. Students share their stories in small groups and each group chooses one story to be read aloud to the class.

## **Poetry**

- Students write a poem related to the topic under study using as many words as possible from the word wall. As a variation, students choose just one word from the word wall and write a poem about that word. Students share their poetry.

## **Metaphors and Similes**

- Students practice their abstract thinking skills by choosing five words from the word wall and creating either a simile or metaphor for each of the words. Students can share their similes and metaphors with others in the class.
- As an extension, each student chooses one simile or metaphor and writes the comparison on construction paper, which is displayed around the classroom. The teacher reads a few comparisons each day to reinforce the concept of similes and metaphors.

## **Word Ad**

- Each group chooses a word, and brainstorms all the possible uses of the word. They create a radio or television ad to 'sell' one of the words from the word wall and present it to the class.
- As a variation, students think of a product for which they create a radio advertisement, using as many words as possible from the word wall. The group avoids making direct reference to the product and asks the class to guess what it is that the ad is trying to sell.

## **Draw, Use, Define**

- Students work cooperatively to acquaint themselves with "word wall" words in this activity. To begin, divide students into teams of three, giving each team writing paper. Assign each team three "word wall" words. Tell the teams that they must draw a picture/illustration of the assigned word, use it in a sentence, and then define it. Place the pictures, sentences and definitions next to each word on the wall.